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ABSTRACT

This handbook, which is intended to assist staff at Neighborhood Networks centers who are responsible for helping unemployed or low-income individuals make the transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency, outlines a 13-step approach to the design and delivery of job readiness programs. The handbook may be used as a guide to direct delivery of job readiness training or a resource for evaluating and selecting employment service providers. The bulk of the handbook advises staff on how to take the following 13 steps of the process described are as follows: (1) choose and organize an effective job readiness training program for residents; (2) communicate to staff and residents the importance of job readiness training; (3) involve employers in the training; (4) connect with job developers and placement providers; (5) identify and evaluate employment strengths and barriers of the target population; (6) categorize the target population; (7) create a mission statement and training goals; (8) establish individual participation rules; (9) design the job readiness training, including its length, format, and curriculum; (10) build staff capacity by training the trainer; (11) review and assess the trainers; (12) measure outcomes; and (13) provide case management support. Concluding the handbook are the names/addresses of 11 "soft skills" and "hard skills" best practice job readiness training models. (MN)

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HOW TO DESIGN AND DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

JUNE 1999

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This publication was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

The guides in this series offer "how to" information on starting up a center, creating programs and identifying center partners; center and program profiles and a wealth of resources.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1995. Since then, hundreds of centers have opened throughout the United States. These centers provide residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured properties with programs, activities and training promoting economic self-sufficiency. These guides contain examples of successful center initiatives and how you can replicate them.

To receive copies of this publication or any others in the series, contact:

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All publications are available from the Neighborhood Networks website at:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

How to Design and Deliver An Effective Employment Program 1

Introduction 1
- Purpose of this Handbook 1
- How Centers Can Use the Handbook 1

What is An Employment Program? 2

Factors that Contribute to Success 2
- Highlights of Job Training Research 2

Linking Successful Components to Neighborhood Networks Centers 3

Neighborhood Networks Center Examples 3
- Case 1: Northport/Packer Community Learning Centers, Madison, Wisconsin: Career Connections Program 4
- Case 2: The Greenbrier Enrichment Center, Columbus, Ohio 9

Elements of Success 13

Resources 15
- Contact Information for Neighborhood Networks Center Case Studies 15
- Organizations, Publications and Websites 15
- Employment and Training Administration (ETA) U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) 15
- NACo-NGA-NCSL Crosswalk 15
- National Alliance of Business (NAB) 15
- The Welfare-to-Work Partnership 16
- Job Link 16
- Neighborhood Networks Information Center 16

How to Design and Deliver an Effective Employment Program

Introduction

In 1995, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) launched the Neighborhood Networks initiative to respond to the economic and educational needs of residents living in HUD-assisted and -insured properties. Neighborhood Networks seeks to engage multifamily property owners nationwide in expanding residents' access to technology and helping them move from welfare to work and from dependency to self-sufficiency.

Today, just three years into the initiative, more than 486 Neighborhood Networks centers have been established nationwide. Centers are attracting participation from residents and community members, partnering with local and national groups and fostering resident movement into the worlds of education and work.

Employment programs, which are an integral part of the Neighborhood Networks concept, vary from center to center and may include General Equivalency Degree (GED) preparation and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, soft skills and job skills training, and job placement services. Employment programs can enhance a resident's job readiness or assist residents in finding and retaining employment.

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook provides Neighborhood Networks center staff with the tools to design and implement an effective employment program. The handbook includes two case studies to illustrate successful employment programs at Neighborhood Networks centers. These centers' employment programs incorporate many of the practices that studies have found effective.

The case studies provide an in-depth look at the development and implementation of each program and include lessons learned, obstacles overcome, critical elements for success and opportunities for replication. By learning what has worked for other centers, center staff can more effectively address the employment needs of residents in their own communities.

How Centers Can Use the Handbook

The successful practices described in the following chapters will be useful for centers that plan to improve existing programs, develop new programs, or work with organizations that provide employment-related services. While many of the features of the case studies can be applied across different sites, there is no substitute for designing a program that directly responds to the needs of local residents and employers. As such, centers planning to create their own employment programs should begin by assessing those needs. Center staff can then choose elements from these case studies that best address the center's individual circumstances and tailor the program to meet the needs of the community.

- ❑ **Centers currently operating employment programs** can improve their services by applying some of the successful practices presented in this handbook.
- ❑ **Centers expanding current services or creating new service options** can use this handbook as a model for developing a program.
- ❑ **Centers partnering or contracting with service providers** can use the handbook for evaluating potential partners.

By learning about practices that have been successful at other centers and under similar circumstances,

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center staff will be in a better position to design an effective program.

To facilitate information sharing among centers, the resource section includes contact information for each center featured in the case studies. To build on these successes, all Neighborhood Networks centers are encouraged to share their own "Lessons Learned" by e-mailing updates to their center profiles at *nnetworks@icfkaiser.com* or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743.

What is An Employment Program?

Employment programs provide a range of services to improve the employment opportunities of participants. The following services may be included in an employment program:

- **Basic Education:** Adult education including high school equivalency (GED) preparation, basic reading, writing and math and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction.
- **Job Readiness:** Life skills training, such as time management, conflict resolution, problem solving, professional dress and demeanor and communication skills.
- **Job Skills Training:** Customized training for employer partners, computer training (keyboarding, introduction to computers and advanced computer training) and other skills training for specific types of jobs.
- **Job Search:** Training in traditional job search methods (newspaper, trade journals and job bank), resume writing and interviewing skills. May also include an employment needs assessment and career planning.
- **Job Development and Placement:** Involves establishing partnerships with employers and job training organizations and conducting job fairs, mock interviews and field trips to educational and employment organizations.
- **Job Retention Services:** Services for residents to maintain employment which may include one-on-one job counseling, support groups, career planning and support services, such as child care and transportation assistance.

Factors that Contribute to Success

Highlights of Job Training Research

What makes an effective employment program? For a program to be considered effective, it must help participants achieve higher earnings and employment retention. Job training programs that attain such outcomes typically share the following common characteristics.

- **Mixed Strategy Approach.** Programs that combine job search, education, job training and work in their design have had a greater impact on participants' incomes and long-term job retention than programs that exclusively focus on either job search or basic education.[1]
- **Employment Focus.** Programs that focus on employment by developing strong ties with local employers, understanding the local labor market and designing training to meet employer requirements for specific jobs have been proven to be effective. Training for a specific job also motivates students.[2]
- **Integration of work and learning.** Programs that integrate work and learning by teaching basic education as part of job skills training have been more effective in improving skills and earnings.[3]
- **Better jobs.** Few welfare-to-work programs have helped recipients increase their earnings by helping them find better jobs. Programs that have focused on this goal and found better jobs for their participants have done so by preparing participants for specific occupations.[4]

- **Barriers to training and employment.** Programs that address the child care, transportation or other needs of individuals and their families enable job seekers to participate more effectively in training and find jobs.[5]
- **Case Management Services.** Programs that provide case management services during the program and after placement and foster long-term personal relationships between staff and program participants increase the likelihood of success.[6]

Welfare Reform

Before developing a job training curriculum, a Neighborhood Networks center should research the welfare-to-work requirements in the state in which it is located to ensure that its program will comply with these requirements. Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), an adult receiving welfare assistance for 24 months must participate in a "work activity." However, the federal legislation leaves it up to each state to define what constitutes a "work activity." Before developing their programs, centers should contact local and state offices to learn more about the following:

- State welfare requirements
- Employment and training rules
- Vocational/educational rules

Linking Successful Components to Neighborhood Networks Centers

To prepare this handbook, six Neighborhood Networks centers were interviewed extensively about their employment programs. The following criteria were used to select the centers:

- Level of resident involvement;
- Amount of employer participation;
- Length of time in operation (minimum 1 year);
- Range of employment and support services offered;
- Focus of program goals on job placement and skills development;
- Level of partnership development (extensive ties to community organizations and employers);
- Established performance measures; and
- Potential for transferability.

This handbook highlights the employment programs of two Neighborhood Networks centers, Northport/Packer (NPP) Community Learning Centers in Madison, Wisconsin and the Greenbrier Enrichment Center (GEC) in Columbus, Ohio.

Both NPP and GEC have developed strong partnerships with area employers and involved residents in the planning and operation of the centers. Both centers customize their instruction to respond to individual needs and skill levels. Both NPP and GEC provide a wide range of employment and support services including helping residents identify and remove barriers preventing them from obtaining and retaining employment. While these programs recognize the importance of finding jobs for residents, they also recognize the need for residents to develop their job skills and improve their earning potential.

These case studies provide only two examples of successful Neighborhood Networks programs. Neighborhood Networks centers across the country are experiencing success in a host of other employment and training activities.

Neighborhood Networks Center Examples

The case studies presented in this handbook provide in-depth descriptions of the employment programs of each center. Each case study is divided into the following sections:

- Background;
- Program Description;
- Employer Partnerships;
- Program Design and Development;
- Staffing;
- Outcomes;
- Lessons Learned; and
- Transferability.

Case 1: Northport/Packer Community Learning Centers, Madison, Wisconsin: Career Connections Program

Northport Apartments and Packer Townhouses are two adjacent developments that are managed jointly by the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin. Approximately 650 residents live in the 280 units, with many households headed by single women.

Since 1994, the Northport/Packer (NPP) Community Learning Centers have offered a wide range of programs for their residents including child care, Head Start, after-school tutoring, community meals, recreational activities, adult education, and employment assistance. The community learning centers located in each development are run jointly.

Background

NPP Community Learning Centers staff created the Career Connections Program to address a perceived gap in employment services for its resident population. Before launching Career Connections, NPP Community Learning Centers staff referred residents to the Dane County Job Center, which primarily serves individuals who are job-ready but temporarily unemployed. NPP discovered quickly that only 10 percent of its residents completed Dane County's job training program. The County's services are not set up to train people who lack formal education, skills or work experience. Residents were unable to meet the county's standards and were not qualified for the available jobs. Most adults who participate in Career Connections have been on public assistance for several years and never held a job. NPP Community Learning Centers staff also identified a discrepancy between the number of jobs available in office/administrative/data entry fields and the lack of a structured and effective method for placing unemployed residents into these positions.

> The growth in Madison's regional economy over the past several years has benefited the general population far more than its minority population. While Madison's overall unemployment rate is less than 1.4 percent, the unemployment rate of its minority population is 18 percent.

Program Description

In addition to adult basic education and job training, Career Connections provides services, such as child care, job readiness training and transportation assistance to help its residents overcome barriers to finding and keeping a job.

Career Connections Program Profile

Program capacity: 51 residents.

Hardware: 8 Pentium computers, printers, a digital camera, a laptop computer, and a portable printer.

Software: Microsoft Office, Internet, Adobe PhotoShop, PageMaker, FileMaker Pro, and several spreadsheet programs.

Assessment of Residents' Needs and Skills. When a resident first contacts Career Connections, a staffer conducts an assessment of the resident's education level, previous work experience and interests and ambitions, and completes an assessment form detailing whether the resident needs basic education, job training or both. Together, the staffer and resident determine employment and education goals that are incorporated into the Resident Development Plan which is required for all residents of the property. If a resident needs basic

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education, such as reading, writing or ESOL instruction, the center provides on-site classes conducted several times a week by the Madison Area Technical College (MATC). Career Connections partnered with MATC to provide these courses and works closely with the MATC instructor to determine when each resident is ready for job training. Career Connections staff believes that MATC's on-site presence is a tremendous asset to the program since residents are able to take advantage of child care services on site and attend classes without having to arrange for transportation.

Job Training. When residents are ready for job training, a Career Connections staff member works with them to find the best match between their interests and the job market in Madison. Career Connections does not prescribe a specific employment path to residents, but instead tries to tailor the residents' ambitions and interests to feasible career paths. Residents work with Career Connections staff to develop their class and job counseling schedules. Career Connections can adapt class schedules to the needs of the individual resident since residents learn independently using computer-based learning. The training follows no fixed length of time — residents take classes until they are ready to look for a job. This approach provides Career Connections with a legitimacy and "buy-in" among residents who do not feel as though they are being pushed through the system.

Placement. When residents are ready to look for a job, the staff works with them to find specific placements with employer partners. Throughout the job training process, residents are counseled in interview and job search skills. The staff arranges interviews with employers that have openings that match the resident's skills and interests. Once a position is identified, staff orients the resident in the employer's organizational culture, such as dress code, work hours, lunch hour practices, work styles and behavior, and communicates the employer's expectations for performance.

Career Connections requires its employer partners to include a skills assessment during interviews so that residents are not judged on their physical appearance or social conduct. For example, Career Connections has lent its laptop computer and portable printer to residents for use during job interviews. In one interview, a resident asked the employer to give him a task to perform to demonstrate his skills; the employer suggested a marketing flyer. The resident was able to design a flyer using graphics software that he knew how to use and had access to through the laptop.

Prior to placement, a Career Connections staff person accompanies the resident to a meeting with the resident's new supervisor to establish a relationship and to have a chance to ask and answer any remaining questions. During the first six months on the job, Career Connections staff monitors the resident's progress through weekly telephone calls with the resident and employer. When a resident employee is not doing well, Career Connections staff can provide additional training and counseling to address the problem, on occasion pulling the resident out of the position temporarily.

Employer Partnerships

Career Connections looks for employers who are committed to hiring a significant number of NPP residents and willing to work with Career Connections to make the residents' employment a success. Partner employers must commit to hiring residents on a trial basis if Career Connections staff deems them to be employment-ready. Career Connections has developed partnerships with six employers, including two insurance firms, a meat packing plant, a national merchandising company, a retailer and the Internal Revenue Service. Residents have been placed in positions for data entry technicians, graphic designers, marketing agents and insurance claim adjusters.

Living Wage Assessment. As a first step in its employer partnership development effort, Career Connections conducted a living wage assessment in the Madison area. By researching the cost of rent,

taxes, food, utilities and other expenses, Career Connections determined that a person must earn an hourly wage of at least $7.50 plus benefits and insurance to afford all basic living expenses. Career Connections will not partner with employers who cannot offer this minimum salary.

Organizational Assessment. A critical component of Career Connections' relationship with employers is its organizational assessment process. Career Connections believes that one of the greatest reasons for job failure is that employees are not mentored in the organizational culture of the employer. When an employer expresses interest in partnering with Career Connections a Career Connections staff member visits the employer to assess the organization. The staff member looks at how employees are treated, the work culture and the level of retention within the organization. Career Connections uses this information to qualify partners and brief residents during the training period. Employers also benefit since residents who have been familiarized with the employer's culture will have a greater chance for success and retention, and thus save recruitment and training costs.

Partnership Development. Employer recruitment requires a great deal of time and effort. Career Connections has found that for every five employers contacted, only one may be interested in discussing the idea of hiring NPP residents. Career Connections is constantly identifying available jobs and potential employers. Volunteers scan want ads, then contact employers to find out more about the positions, request sample tasks and work products and describe how the Career Connections program works. Career Connections explains to potential employers that hiring NPP residents is a smart business decision — not charity. By hiring NPP residents, an employer saves time and money looking for employees, and is guaranteed

Partnership Profile

In one example of an unusual partnership, Career Connections partnered with the University of Wisconsin Business School to hold a forum on welfare reform for the business school students and faculty. Residents had four weeks to work with students and develop the forum, and at the end of this period, made a presentation on welfare to work issues. Career Connections would like to create more partnerships with academic institutions, such as networking NPP center computers with computers at local colleges and universities, so that residents can access courses

employees who have been trained in its procedures and culture.

Career Connections also holds monthly open houses where employers can visit the center and describe their companies and the kinds of jobs available. The open houses have helped break down cultural barriers between employers and residents. Career Connections also works with the County Job Center, which sends employers to the NPP Community Learning Centers for presentations.

On a monthly basis, Career Connections convenes an informal board of human resource professionals representing six different companies in Madison for informal discussions about job leads and contacts. Career Connections staff values the chance to work with partners both formally and informally to increase its community network.

Program Design and Development

It took just over two years for NPP staff to plan the program, obtain resources for the center and build the partnerships with MATC and the County Job Center.

Sample of Survey Questions

- ❑ What goals do you have for yourself and your children?
- ❑ What kinds of services do you need?
- ❑ What will you do with these services?

Residents worked with the director of Neighborhood Networks Community Learning Centers and American Baptist Homes to design the Northport and Packer program. When the director distributed a survey to residents to find out what kinds of services they wanted in the Career Connections Program, less than six percent responded. He then decided to interview people in person. According to the director, finding out exactly what residents wanted and needed was critical to the success of the program. Residents are interested and committed to the program because it provides them with services they need, such as child care and employment-focused training.

Staff

The NPP properties use residents to meet their staffing needs. Residents work for the child care center, the Head Start Program and the property maintenance and management offices. The Career Connections Program is also staffed entirely by residents. Despite the limited work experience of the three staff members, there has been no turnover since the program began.

Career Connections Staff

Job developer — contacts potential employers and conducts assessments of potential partners (salary: $29,000).

Program operator — conducts resident needs assessments, designs resident training and oversees computer-based training (salary: $25,000).

Program administrator — provides secretarial support for the Program (salary: $22,000).

Community Learning Center director — provides guidance and oversight to the Career Connections staff

The positions available at the Career Connections Program offer full benefits, including sick leave, vacation, health insurance and a retirement plan. Funding for the Career Connections Program, which cost $131,000 in 1997 came from HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Initially, the city of Madison was hesitant about using its CDBG funds from HUD on a program with such a flexible structure that hired unemployed residents. However, NPP

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persuaded the city that funding the Career Connections Program would be an effective use of funds. The Neighborhood Networks center plans to seek future operating funds from a Department of Labor grant and has trained its staff in grant writing so that they can apply to foundations for additional funding.

Outcomes

Before NPP launched its Career Connections Program, 60 percent of its adult residents depended on public assistance; in the first two years of program operation the percentage declined significantly to 28 percent. Seventy residents have found jobs after completing the Career Connections program. Eleven of these have left the NPP apartments and bought their own homes. Residents have found jobs with hourly wages ranging from $7.50 to $14, all including health care and benefits. From monitoring resident progress for six months, staff has learned that out of 70 placements in the past two years, only one person left a job during the first six months.

Furthermore, the six participating employers have been pleased with the program. In fact, many feel that the program demands too much of the residents and imposes higher standards than the employers do themselves. Additionally, some employers would like to send non-resident employees with performance problems to Career Connections for computer skills training. Career Connections may expand the program to include this service as a way to generate income for the program.

Career Connections Model:
Key Steps to Developing a Successful Job Training Program

1. Find out what residents want from a job training program and involve them in designing and implementing the program.
2. Research what a living wage is for your community.
3. Establish criteria for and conduct an assessment of potential employer partners.
4. Develop partnerships with employers and involve them in the design of the training program to ensure that it addresses their staffing needs.
5. Conduct an assessment of each resident's educational level, previous work experience, interests and ambitions.
6. Design a flexible program that can be tailored to meet the individual needs of the participants.
7. Address barriers to training and employment such as lack of child care and transportation.
8. Develop partnerships with colleges and other service providers.
9. Involve residents in staffing and marketing the program.
10. Monitor a resident's progress for six months after job placement.
11. Develop a system for tracking outcomes.

Lessons Learned

Neighborhood Networks centers developing job training programs should:

Program Highlight

In response to many residents' creative and artistic interests, Career Connections offered a high-end graphics instruction course. Residents pursue their creative software interests while learning technical skills. Many have been placed in well-paying graphic design

- ❑ Involve residents in the ongoing design process and operation of the center.
- ❑ Find out what the residents' dreams and ambitions are, and then try to match residents with jobs that best suit their interests.
- ❑ Be informal, flexible and willing to change the design if an element of the program is not working.
- ❑ During the start-up phase, focus your energy on creating a high-quality program rather than getting quantifiable results. Demand a high level of commitment and quality of both the staff and the residents.
- ❑ Continue to work with residents after they are employed. Problems often arise after the first few months of employment. At that point, they could get discouraged and possibly leave their jobs without the support of the employer and the Neighborhood Networks center.

Transferability

The owners of the Northport Apartments and Packer Townhouses are building a 23,000 square foot facility in Milwaukee and applying many of the same principals used at NPP. The owners recognize, however, that each community is different and that they cannot simply replicate the Career Connections model and expect it to succeed. Therefore, the owners, management and residents are working together to find other ways to develop the employment, training and placement component.

Case 2: The Greenbrier Enrichment Center, Columbus, Ohio

Six years ago, drugs and routine shootings earned the Greenbrier Apartment complex the nickname "Uzi Alley." Located in the inner city of Columbus, the complex was thought to be a "lost cause" because of the high crime rate and economically depressed state of the neighborhood. But in 1993, the community mobilized and created the Greenbrier Enrichment Center (GEC) which provides adults and youth with the skills they need to improve their lives.

Background

The Greenbrier Enrichment Center (GEC) serves approximately 3,000 residents from the housing development and the surrounding community. Eighty percent of the residents receive public assistance or work minimum-wage jobs and 70 percent are single mothers. Approximately 60 percent of residents are African American, five percent are Hispanic, and the remainder are Caucasian, Native American or Asian.

GEC began as an all-volunteer effort. However, through donations and grants received in the last few years, the center has been able to expand the services it provides. With a 1995 United Way grant, the center started a pilot program to help women become self-sufficient. During the same period, the center received a grant through HUD's Drug Elimination Grant Program. With these funds the center expanded its programming by offering parenting classes, free immunizations, adult education programs and a food pantry.

In 1997, GEC became a part of the Neighborhood Networks initiative, opened the Greenbrier Computer Learning Center with 12 Pentium computers and incorporated computer training into its array of services.

Program Description

GEC provides basic education, soft skills training, job skills training, job search, placement and retention services. The center also provides support services that help residents overcome barriers to employment such as child care, transportation, or counseling to deal with substance abuse or domestic violence.

GEC's core employment program, the Residents Off Welfare — Teaching, Educating, Achieving, Motivating, Success (ROW TEAMS) Program, started in 1995 as a pilot program funded with a $15,000 United Way grant. The goal of the program was to help 25 women become self-sufficient by providing education, job training and assistance in building life skills. GEC based its curriculum design on the needs expressed by residents during community focus groups.

Learning to Work

More than 60 percent of the residents who come to the center are unemployed. Many have never been employed and therefore need to "learn how to work." Residents learn the skills needed to be successful in the workplace and discover a range of education and economic possibilities.

The program met its goal of helping the participants become self-sufficient.

- Twenty women graduated from the program;
- Sixteen women found jobs after the program;
- Three women entered college programs; and
- One woman started her own business.

In 1996, through additional funding provided by HUD and other partners, the ROW TEAMS Program expanded its services so that all Greenbrier residents could participate.

Soft Skills Training. The ROW TEAMS Life Management Skills (LMS) Training Program is a three-week "soft skills" training program that teaches students how to adjust to the work world. Based on discussions with residents and employers, staff designed the program with an emphasis on workplace socialization. Students work on communication skills, conflict resolution, managing personal responsibilities and building self-esteem. Role playing is also used to simulate work place situations. After completing the

program, participants find jobs or transfer to the work-study program, where they can add to their skills through on-the-job training.

GEC Employment Programs

- Greenbrier Computer Learning Center – computer training.
- Residents Off Welfare – Teaching, Education, Achieving, Motivating Success (ROW TEAMS) – core employment program.
- Life Management Skills (LMS) – three-week "soft skills" training course.
- Work study program – weekly classes and on-the-job training at the center.

Work-study, part of the weekly class offerings, consists of lectures, shadowing other workers and hands-on assignments. Students who enroll in the work-study program work in the center as assistants and are trained for one of four types of positions:

- Child care assistant;
- Clerical assistant;
- Outreach worker; or
- Training assistant.

Residents who participate in the work-study program often suggest improvements which helps the program stay focused on their needs.

Training. In addition to the Life Management Skills Program, GEC offers computer classes five days a week in the afternoons and evenings. A six-week basic computer training course and a three-week advanced computer course are available to students on an ongoing basis. Students can also enroll in adult education classes off-site at Columbus State Community College.

Supportive Services. The center also offers a number of job retention services for residents who have jobs but need assistance with the every day challenges of the work place. Family service workers follow up with residents and assist them with problems they may encounter on the job. In addition, GEC holds monthly support groups for residents working to become self-sufficient.

To overcome other barriers to employment, residents meet with an on-site family service coordinator to help them obtain the resources they need. The center offers a number of child care options, provides referrals to health care organizations and counsels residents dealing with substance abuse or domestic violence. Many of these services are also offered on site. To address their transportation needs, the center provides 30 free passes on public transportation to participants who are employed.

Employer Partnership

Partnership Profile

Through employer involvement, the center has also expanded its services. For example, the center is negotiating an agreement with a local bank for a customized training course. The bank, which has already hired 20 center graduates, was so impressed with the quality of graduates that it asked the center to train students to use its specialized key pad. In return, the bank agreed to hire individuals who complete this training.

The director of the program focuses much of his time and effort on establishing and maintaining strong partnerships with employers. Recruiters from area businesses, such as DFS/Eddie Bauer-Spiegel, Alliance Data Systems, United Parcel Services and Dawson Temporaries, come to the center on a weekly basis to interview students. Although most of the jobs available are entry-level, they often become stepping stones for other opportunities.

Targeting Training. GEC involved employers in the development of the training curriculum. Because employers request the training that participants receive, they have been very satisfied with center graduates they have hired. Employers pay the center a $200 placement fee for each graduate they hire. According to the director, the city's low unemployment rate and the center's strong ties to employers made

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this income generating aspect of the program possible.

Program Design and Development

In order to develop a job training program that would meet the needs of both employers and residents, GEC involved both parties in the planning and implementation of the program. As part of the design and development process, the program director interviewed both residents and potential employers to assess each group's needs. By conducting these interviews, the program director found that while residents needed computer literacy training, those who had never worked before also needed soft skills training. Employers that were interviewed indicated that job skills were important but not as important as finding employees who are responsible and committed to the work place.

The program also expanded on the partnerships that were established during the community mobilization effort in 1993 and the ROW TEAMS pilot project. Partnerships have been critical to the center's knowledge of and access to resources and funding. The program director and residents who work in the center have helped to establish the following partnerships:

- Columbus State Community College provides GED training and higher education classes.
- Children's Hospital provides free parenting classes.
- The health department and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program supply immunizations.
- Ohio's Welfare-to-Work state office designated the center as a "Work Source Site," which makes it part of the state's welfare-to-work system. The center has a state job search computer to locate available job openings and the center may become a state employment hotline site. The center also educates residents about the implications of the state's Workfirst Initiative.

Program Funding. The Greenbrier Enrichment Center operates on an annual budget of $480,000. The job training program budget of $280,000 is 58 percent of the total budget. This covers staff salaries and other center operating costs. The center receives funding from:

- HUD CDBG grants;
- United Way;
- Ohio's Welfare-to-Work initiative;
- Donations from community organizations; and
- Income generated by job placement fees paid by employers.

Although fundraising is an ongoing process, the center's strong ties with the community have helped it secure funding. Center staff would like to generate additional income through placement fees charged to employers who recruit center participants.

Incentives. The greatest incentive for residents to participate in the job training programs is their compliance with the state's new welfare-to-work requirements. Under Ohio Works First work requirements, individuals who are not working must enroll in at least 20 hours of education or training per week. As part of the center's work-study program, student outreach workers go door-to-door to educate residents about the state's new work requirements and encourage them to enroll in the Life Management Skills Program.

Word of mouth is also a strong marketing tool. Since all of the workers at the center are or were in the same situation, residents feel peer pressure to participate in the center's programs.

Once students complete the program, they can work in the center until they find permanent employment. This guaranteed employment provides another incentive for participation. Additionally, when students enroll in the program, they are eligible for free child care and transportation vouchers. This helps them

overcome some of the barriers to employment and education.

Staff

Residents of the Greenbrier Apartments and the surrounding community work at the center. Through feedback provided by resident employees, the center has remained in touch with and focused on the community. The center has 20 work-study employees who work in the center year round in addition to four full-time staff members:

- Program director;
- Service coordinator;
- Family service coordinator; and
- Computer trainer.

Outcomes

From June 1997 to June 1998, 523 people graduated from ROW TEAMS and 62 percent (323 people) found jobs. At least 142 people or 44 percent have retained those jobs. More than 300 graduates who were previously on welfare are now working. Graduates have found jobs in manufacturing, customer service, data entry and clerical support.

Lessons Learned

The following advice is offered to other Neighborhood Networks centers developing job training programs:

- Give residents ownership of the program by involving them in the planning and development processes and by employing them at the center. This has played a key role in the center's success.
- Educate residents about the impact the new welfare law will have on their lives.

Ohio's Workfirst strategy forces people to work—people who may not be ready for or committed to work. The Greenbrier Enrichment Center still struggles to find ways to motivate residents who do not want to work. Furthermore, the center director found that the state's Workfirst system failed to anticipate the support services people need to help them get back to work and, therefore, failed to provide the necessary funding for those services. Center staff has been overwhelmed by the magnitude of the services needed. In response, outreach workers conducted a door-to-door survey of resident needs. With this data the Center can anticipate the needs of residents and tailor programs to meet them.

Transferability

The GEC program can be replicated successfully as long as the critical elements of the program are applied. The program should involve residents and employers throughout the planning and development process. To design a program that best addresses the areas of greatest need, program planners should conduct a survey of resident needs before planning begins. Center staff should also address barriers to employment by building partnerships with organizations that can provide services such as child care and transportation either on site or nearby. At Urban Hollow, another HUD-assisted property in Columbus, and the management sought guidance in opening an employment center. As a result, Urban Hollow is assessing the needs of its residents while using the GEC model to establish the new center. Representatives from the United Way are also interested in starting a program based on the GEC model. The director stresses that the success of these programs will depend on the will of the community to make it work.

GEC Model: Key Steps to Developing a Successful Job Training Program

1. Survey residents to assess skill level and needs. Conduct focus groups with the resident community to find out more about what they need and want from the program.
2. Establish and maintain strong partnerships with employers. Ask employers what job skills their positions require.
3. Involve residents and employers in the design and implementation of the program. Ensure that the curriculum is flexible enough to adapt to changes in client population and employer needs.
4. Establish and maintain strong partnerships with community-based organizations to secure funding and other resources.
5. Offer a wide range of employment and education programs such as basic adult education, job readiness, job skills training, occupation specific training, job search and allow residents access to individualized programming.
6. Develop a "soft skills" job readiness program to help residents who have not worked before learn the skills necessary to retain employment.
7. Develop a work-study program for students to strengthen skills while on the job.
8. Customize training to specific industries based on partnerships with employers willing to hire residents who complete the training.
9. Offer a range of support services such as child care, transportation, counseling, and health care. Provide case management services up front to help residents address any barriers to training or employment, such as lack of child care or transportation.
10. Develop an ongoing support group to help employed residents deal with on-the-job issues. Make support services available to residents after they have completed the program.
11. Make sure employment programs meet any state welfare requirements. Educate residents on the effects of the new Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) law.
12. Building relationships with participants, employers, community groups and government agencies should be a primary goal of the program.

Elements of Success

This handbook highlights two Neighborhood Networks centers with employment programs that effectively meet the needs of residents and employers in the communities they serve. The programs incorporate many of the programmatic features that employment and training research have found to be effective.

Some of the key elements of the success of these programs include:

- **Resident-driven program.** Find out what residents want from an employment program and involve them in the design, implementation and operation of center programs. Also include residents in the staffing and marketing of the program.

- **Employer involvement.** Programs that focus on employment by developing strong ties with local employers, understanding the local labor market and designing training to meet employer requirements for specific jobs have been proven to be effective. Training for a specific job also motivates students. By involving employers in the design and implementation of the employment programs, centers are able to better assess employer needs and tailor their programs to meet those needs.

Tips for Developing Close Industry Ties

- Establish industry councils for particular occupations.
- Recruit instructors who are well connected to their respective industries (speak with companies' human resource managers).
- Promote employer "ownership" of the training program.
- Organize industry participation in a broad range of program development activities.

Source: Edwin Melendez, *Working on Jobs: Center for Employment and Training* (Boston, MA: The Mauricio Gaston Institute, 1996).

- **Employer assessment.** In addition to assessing employer needs, centers should also establish standards for and conduct an assessment of potential employer partners. Assess how employees are treated, the work culture and the level of retention within the organization. Use this information to qualify partners and brief residents during the training period. Employers also will benefit from this assessment since residents who have been familiarized with the employer's culture will have a greater chance for success and retention, and thus save recruitment and training costs.

- **Individualized training and career guidance.** Conduct an assessment of each resident's educational level, previous work experience, interests and ambitions. Offer a variety of programs and a wide range of services to meet the needs of all participants including those with below average skills and those working to become self sufficient. Then find the best match between a participant's interests and the job market in your community. Try to tailor the participant's ambitions and interests to feasible career paths.

- **Case management.** Provide comprehensive support services that identify and remove barriers to employment, such as lack of child care or transportation. Develop an ongoing support group to help employed residents deal with on-the-job issues. Make support services available to residents after they have completed the program. Programs that provide case management services during the program and after placement and foster long-term personal relationships between staff and program participants increase the likelihood of success.

- **Follow-up services.** Provide follow-up services for at least six months after placement to help residents maintain employment. Track the progress of graduates after they leave the program to help them address any needs while they are on the job. When appropriate, provide additional training and counseling to address problems that may arise and pull the resident out of the position temporarily, if necessary.

- **Living wage.** Research what a living wage is for your community. Programs that have focused on increasing participants' earnings by helping them find better jobs have done so by preparing participants for specific occupations.

- **Mixed Strategy Approach.** Programs that combine job search, education, job training and work in their design have had a greater impact on participants' incomes and long-term job retention than programs that exclusively focus on either job search or basic education.

- **Partnerships with community-based organizations.** Partnership building, while time consuming, plays a key role in the development

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of a center's employment programs. Maintain extensive partnerships with employers, community service providers, local government agencies and community-based organizations to obtain access to funding and other critical resources.

- ❑ **Performance measures.** Develop a system for tracking outcomes, such as placements, job retention and data on wages and wage increases. Being able to show measurable outcomes plays a key role in obtaining funding for employment programs.

Resources

Contact Information for Neighborhood Networks Center Case Studies

Northport/Packer Computer Learning Centers

Contact: Carmen Porco, Director
Northport Apartments Corporation
1927 Northport Drive
Madison, WI 53704
(608) 255-2759
Email: cporco@mailbag.com

Greenbrier Enrichment Center

Contact: John Gregory, Director
Greenbrier Enrichment Center
374 North Virginia Lee Road, Apartment 4
Columbus, Ohio 43209
(614) 239-7788

Organizations, Publications and Websites

Neighborhood Networks
http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org
Includes links to websites with job training resources.

Northport Community Learning Center
http://northport.org

Packer Community Learning Center
http://www.packers.org

The Greenbrier Enrichment Center
http://www.hud.gov/nnw/nnw-data/PAR_0249.html

Employment and Training Administration (ETA) U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

http://wtw.doleta.gov

This is the Internet home page of the ETA's welfare-to-work division. The "Highlights" section contains very current information, especially on the welfare-to-work competitive grants. Key links are provided for individuals, employers and the welfare-to-work community. Connections are offered for material on legislation, regulations, regional contacts, other websites, news clippings and fact sheets. The archive has records of state planning guides, funding allocations and grant information. This site is the place to start for locating information on federal government programs in welfare to work. Contact information for each ETA program can be obtained at the website.

NACo-NGA-NCSL Crosswalk

http://www.ttrc.doleta.gov/ETA/Welfare/w2wtable.htm

This site provides a table that cross-references many of the topic areas presented in the individual websites of three separate organizations that have extensive information on welfare-to-work programs. The organizations are National Association of Counties, National Governors' Association and National Conference of State Legislators. Topics include state level information on legislation, reports, programs, contacts and documents related to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). This site saves time if you want to know specifically what legislators and government programs are doing in this vast field.

National Alliance of Business (NAB)

Contact: 1-800-787-2848 or info@nab.com

The National Alliance of Business (NAB) manages both a welfare-to-work program and a school-to-work program. Under both programs, NAB provides training and technical assistance to educational institutions, businesses and intermediary organizations (e.g. job-training nonprofits) in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of welfare-to-work and school-to-work efforts. Neighborhood Networks center staff can take advantage of NAB training and technical assistance services to improve their effectiveness as job training and placement professionals. Participation may improve their ability to help center clients find employment.

The Welfare-to-Work Partnership

Contact: Eli Segal (888) 955-3005
info@welfaretowork.org
http://www.welfaretowork.org

The partnership was founded by the business community to help businesses reach the new workforce of public assistance recipients. The partnership actively recruits companies as "Business Partners." Neighborhood Networks center staff can help clients find employment with welfare-to-work partner businesses in their community. The website has two sections that provide information relevant to all stakeholders involved in welfare-to-work initiative. "Blueprints for Hiring" is an employer-focused report that describes the many advantages and employer incentives for hiring from this new workforce, including tax credits and wage subsidies. "Working Examples" profiles over 80 employers of various sizes that are successfully hiring former welfare recipients. Other sections feature facts and statistics, other links, events and news to use.

Job Link

Contact: Bill McMahon (612) 529-4373
bill@joblink.org

HIRED provides community-based job training and placement services in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. It accomplishes its work through Job Link, a computer-based job development system that links employers, job development organizations and job-seekers through a large database of available job openings submitted by the participating employers themselves. Other HIRED services include technical assistance, employment counselor training and custom employment network development. Neighborhood Networks centers might consider developing a job search program based on the Job Link model.

Neighborhood Networks Information Center

The Neighborhood Networks Information Center has a range of materials available for free, or at a minimal charge, to anyone with an interest in the initiative. Call the Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743 or TTY at (703) 934-3230 to place an order. Order forms are available for items that require payment. Resources include:

- **Neighborhood Networks Resource Guide** (binder): The Resource Guide offers a step-by-step overview for establishing and operating a Neighborhood Networks center. 383 pages ($20)
- ***News Brief*** (current and past issues): A quarterly newsletter that highlights national achievements for a wide audience including partners and the public. (free)
- ***NNewsline*** (current and past issues): A bimonthly newsletter that highlights topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks centers and coordinators. (free)
- **List of current Neighborhood Networks centers**: The monthly list includes center names, cities and states. (free)
- **Fact sheets**: Fact sheets are one-page summaries of various topics relevant to the operations of Neighborhood Networks centers. Fact sheets that are currently available include an overview of the initiative, telehealth programs, health information, health partnerships, child care, transportation, seniors, and community

improvements at Neighborhood Networks centers. (free)

- ❑ **Success Stories**: Brief descriptions of successful activities at Neighborhood Networks centers across the country. (free)
- ❑ **Highlights Video**: A useful presentation tool featuring footage of Neighborhood Networks activity in Boston, New Orleans and Seattle. 17 minutes ($20)
- ❑ **Media Montage Video**: Highlights of broadcast coverage of Neighborhood Networks activity across the United States. 6 minutes ($20)
- ❑ **Senior Connection Video**: A great tool for marketing and outreach, this video helps demonstrate how older adults benefit from Neighborhood Networks center activities. 17 minutes ($20)

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[1] Julie Strawn, *Beyond Job Search or Basic Education: Rethinking the Role of Skills in Welfare Reform* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 1998).

[2] *Id.*

[3] Jobs for the Future, Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc., Nancy Nye, Brandon Roberts & Associates and Richard Schramm, *Federal Jobs Policy: History, Current Status, and Future Challenges* (Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 1997).

[4] Strawn, 1998.

[5] *Id.*

[6] Jobs for the Future, 1997.